



TO: D.W. Wallace, Captain

FROM: L.M. Hartwell, Sergeant

DATE: August 17, 2005

RE: Body Tattoo

This letter is in reference to a veteran employee of the Montgomery Fire Department, who has been employed with the city for approximately 17 years. D/C Gordon displays a tattoo on his arm that is in violation of master letter file #8-4, tattoo/brand and body piercing policy. D/C Gordon has a tattoo of the confederate flag on his arm that is proudly displayed in his short sleeve uniform. The policy states that members should not be allowed to display any tattoos, that would detract from an appropriate professional image while in uniform. How can a confederate flag displayed on his arm in public in the deep south be a professional image when you work in the state of Alabama, the birthplace of the civil rights movement. There has been heated debate for years concerning this flag displayed at public places and on public vehicles for years. People have even went so far as to hold marches to the state capital to get this flag removed because of what the flag represents. Finally, the politicians agreed with the people of the state of Alabama and removed the flag from the state capital, public buildings, and public vehicles. The City of Montgomery removed the offensive display of the confederate flag from its vehicle, fire apparatus, and also the uniforms that the fire department has to wear (D/C Gordon arm still displays the flag in the city uniform). The rules states that tattoos are a personal choice and is allowable except when they are prejudicial to the good order and discipline of the fire service, or of a nature that tends to bring discredit upon the fire department. Section A of the rule states that tattoos that are obscene and/or advocate sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination are prohibited in and out of uniform. Using uniform items to cover such tattoo is not an option. It also states that tattoos can be grandfathered in, but how can any member of the city personnel grandfather in a symbol that was so offensive to the public and due to its history and what it stands for, the City of Montgomery departed company with the racial symbol. But yet, D/C Gordon still proudly displays this symbol on his arm and he holds a post in the department that is leadership over a district. D/C Gordon actions within the fire department with personnel in the past, coupled with the confederate flag on his arm only opens up the subject of whether he is prejudice. This is a symbol that the city disassociated itself with, so why would the department let someone keep this same symbol on their body that is very visible to the public and employees. When the city removed this flag from their logo because of its offensive background, why let a employee continue to display this symbol unless you disagree with the city and think that the flag should have never been removed and what to show your support for the history of the flag and the feelings that are associated with this flag. This symbol has been used by the Klux Ku Klan, Skin Heads, and other racial hate groups to display their feelings of prejudice.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L.M. Hartwell Sgt.".

L.M. Hartwell, Sergeant  
Station 13, District II